

*** NETANSWERS INTERNET EXTRA ***

*** Number 34: Shockwave ***

Shockwave is a plug-in that beefs up your web browser by adding the ability to play animation, sound and games. If you've wondered what's the big deal with "Shocked" web pages, read on.

-.-.- Get Shocked! -.-.-

Shockwave is a popular plug-in that gives your web browser newfound multimedia powers. Shockwave gives your browser the ability to display advanced animation and play more types of sounds. Web sites that contain Shockwave content (called "Shocked" sites) are rather common, but you won't be able to see Shockwave's magic unless your browser has the plug in.

With the plug-in, well, plugged-in, you'll notice your browser can do all sorts of new tricks. One such feature is "vector animation," which means Shockwave can quickly move, resize and rotate images. Shockwave also gives your browser the ability to interact with the mouse before you click the button: for instance, pointing to an item can reveal text describing what it does or play a sound.

The best under-one-roof collection of Shockwave tricks is the demonstration site Shockrave (<http://www.shockrave.com>). There you'll find all sorts of games, cartoons and music that utilize Shockwave. It's a lot of fun -- you'll quickly see that Shockwave allows your browser to do intriguing things that it couldn't before. A site called Shocker (<http://www.shocker.com/>) features a massive list of other sites with more shocking fun.

Your browser may already have Shockwave installed -- some releases of Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer come with it pre-installed. The page http://shockrave.macromedia.com/plugins_test.html will tell you if your browser has Shockwave yet. If it is not installed, you can download Shockwave at <http://www.macromedia.com/shockwave/download/>.

There are actually a couple of different Shockwave plug-ins that are commonly used on the Net: Shockwave Flash and Shockwave Director. Director's robust: it can be used for a variety of interactive multimedia productions, including business presentations, CD-ROM games, as well as Web content. On the other hand, Flash is primarily for vector graphics and animation. The Flash plug in is smaller than Director and requires less memory, but some of the Shockwave stuff on the Web uses features available only in Director. I recommend downloading the Director plug-in. Since it can do everything Flash can and more, choosing Director makes your browser compatible with all Shocked sites.

On PCs, the Shockwave plug-in requires a 486 66 MHz or faster processor (although a Pentium 100 MHz or faster is recommended) running Windows 95 or NT. Windows 3.1 is not supported; presumably Windows 98 is. Your machine will need at least 16 MB RAM, plus a browser (naturally): Both Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer are supported.

On the Mac, Shockwave requires a 68040 66 MHz or faster processor (although PowerPC 100 MHz or faster is recommended). Mac users need 16 MB RAM and Mac OS 7 or 8. Shockwave doesn't work with Microsoft Internet Explorer on the Mac, so

you'll have to use Netscape Navigator or Communicator.

Shockwave files are usually very small, especially considering the amount of animation and sound they contain. Still, using Shockwave does mean your computer will have to download extra information from the Internet. If you have a 28.8 Kbps or faster connection, you'll find that most Shocked pages will download quite quickly. But if you have a slower Net connection, you might not think Shockwave's graphics are worth the extra gray hairs that will appear as they download.

=*=*= SITES MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE =*=*=

Shockwave Test: http://shockwave.macromedia.com/plugins_test.html

Download Shockwave: <http://www.macromedia.com/shockwave/download/>

Shockwave: <http://www.shockwave.com>

Shocker: <http://www.shocker.com>

Yahoo's listing of Shocked sites: http://www.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Companies/Computers/Software/Multimedia/Macromedia/Products_and_Services/Shockwave/Shocked_Sites/

=*=*= THE END =*=*=

The NetAnswers Internet Extra is free to all CompuServe members. It's available in the Internet Community Forum -- GO INETCOM and look in file library 11, "NetAnswers".

Got comments or ideas for future issues? We want to hear 'em. Just send a message to savetz@compuserve.com (74774,2725).

Copyright 1998 by Kevin Savetz.